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ABSTRACT

The computer literacy and education program described in this brief narrative report was undertaken by North Carolina schools after the General Assembly provided $28.4 million in funding. The goal of the program was to achieve a ratio of one microcomputer for every 50 students to permit 30 minutes of computer access per week for each student. As of June 1987, a ratio of one computer per 23 students had been reached. Additional data are reported in five figures: (1) Computer Awareness Expenditures for 1984-85, 1985-86, and 1986-87; (2) Number of Microcomputers, 1982-1987; (3) Location of Computers; (4) Uses of Microcomputers; and (5) Needs, 1987 and Beyond. (EW)

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Recognizing the need for all North Carolina students to be aware of computer operations and applications, the 1983 session of the General Assembly authorized the creation of a committee for the Study of Computer Literacy in the North Carolina Public Schools. The Study Commission's report, submitted to the 1984 session of the General Assembly, endorsed the "State Plan for Computer Utilization in the North Carolina Public Schools" and recommended that "the State Board of Education should review each school system's local plan to assure that . . . its students are receiving basic computer awareness instruction prior to graduation." The General Assembly appropriated $28.4 million to provide funding of the Committee's proposals for computer hardware, computer literacy software, maintenance, and staff development. The appropriated amount was based on the goal of establishing a ratio of one computer for every fifty students to allow thirty minutes per week of computer access time for each student.

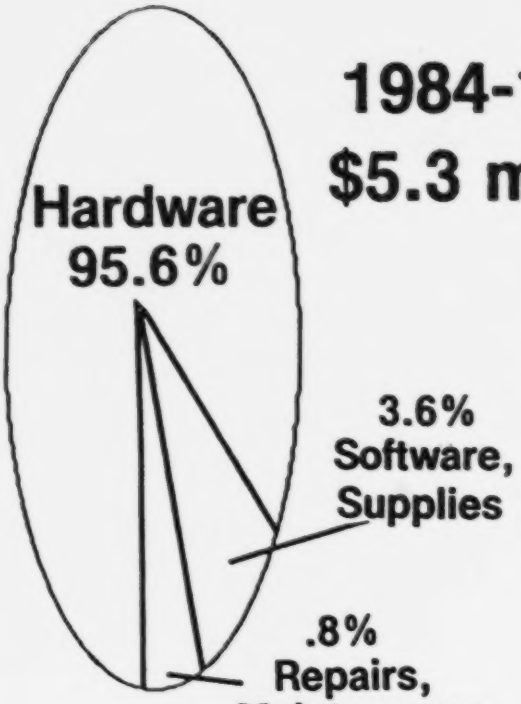
During the 1984-85, 1985-86, and 1986-87 school years, the $28.4 million was allocated to local school systems by grade levels, beginning with grades 7-12 in the first year. Schools were asked to devise computer education programs which included computer awareness skills for students and educators. By the completion of the funding in June, 1987, $26.4 million had been allocated for computer hardware, software, supplies, repairs, and maintenance and $2 million for computer training of certified personnel . (See Figure 1) The computer training allocations were divided into two funding periods with $1,000,000 appropriated each year of the final two years. During the first year of staff development monies, 40,315 certified personnel were involved in computer education training.

Prior to the first year of funding, the school systems reported 12,740 microcomputers in place in the schools. At the end of the first year, the number of micros had increased to 22,471. The second-year equipment count showed 33,562 computers in use in the schools. ***As of June 1987, the final year of the funding, 46,871 microcomputers were reported. This final count represents one computer for every 23 students exceeding the General Assembly funding goal of one microcomputer for every 50 students.*** In many instances this lower ratio was achieved by careful purchasing and by use of funding from federal, other state, special local, or community sources. (See Figure 2)

The placement of the 46,871 microcomputers varies across the state with the primary placement locations being in classrooms and computer labs. (See Figure 3) The uses of the microcomputers also vary but "computer literacy" use remained the top priority all three years of the funding. (See Figure 4)

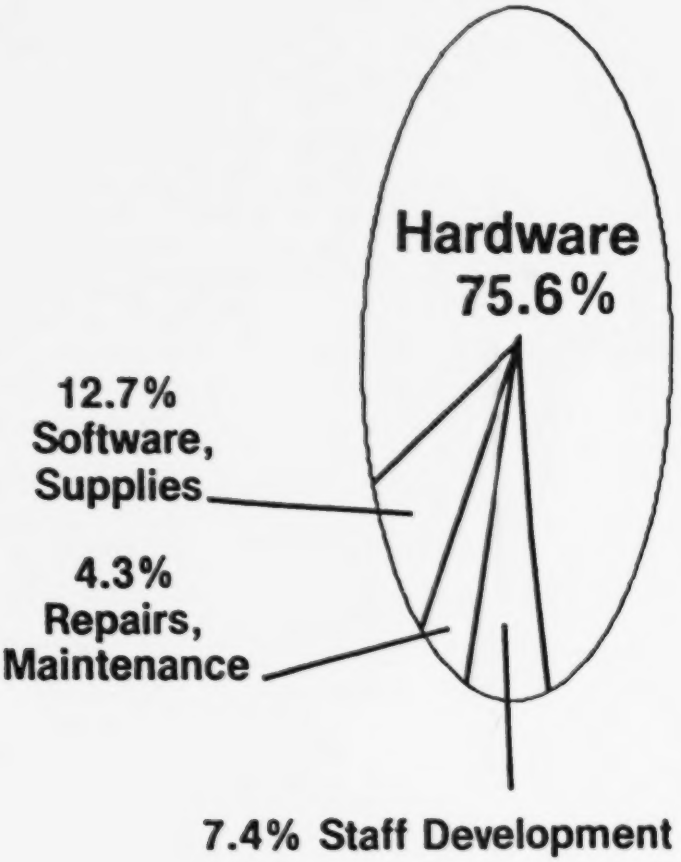
The conclusion of the funding for computer literacy in June 1987 marked the successful establishment of an initial statewide level of computer opportunities for students and teachers. However, there are still computer awareness needs which school systems must address: staffing, software and supplies, repairs/maintenance/replacement of equipment, facility needs, alternative delivery systems, teacher support, specialized peripherals, demonstration sites, and specialized training. (See Figure 5) The challenge to integrate microcomputers effectively into all content areas as well as all administrative functions . . . the challenge for "1987 and Beyond" . . . has just begun.

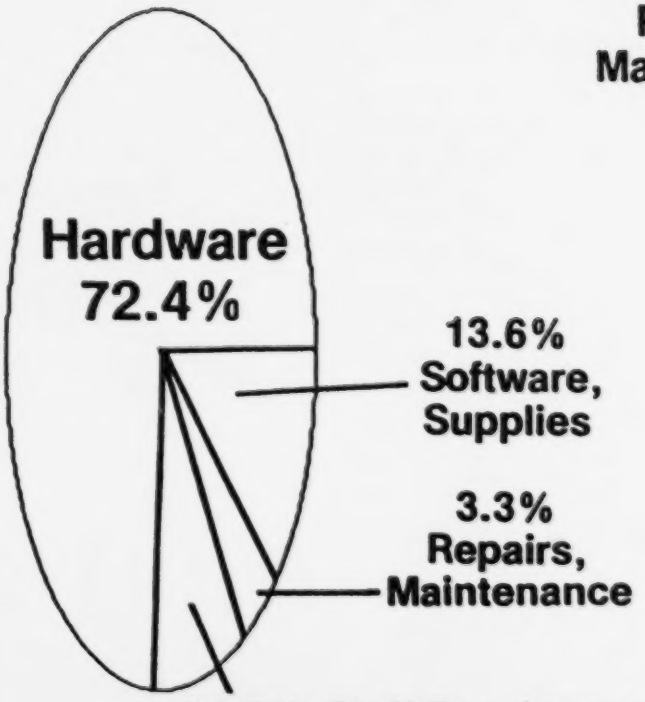
Computer Awareness Expenditures



1984-1985
$5.3 million

1985-1986
$13.5 million

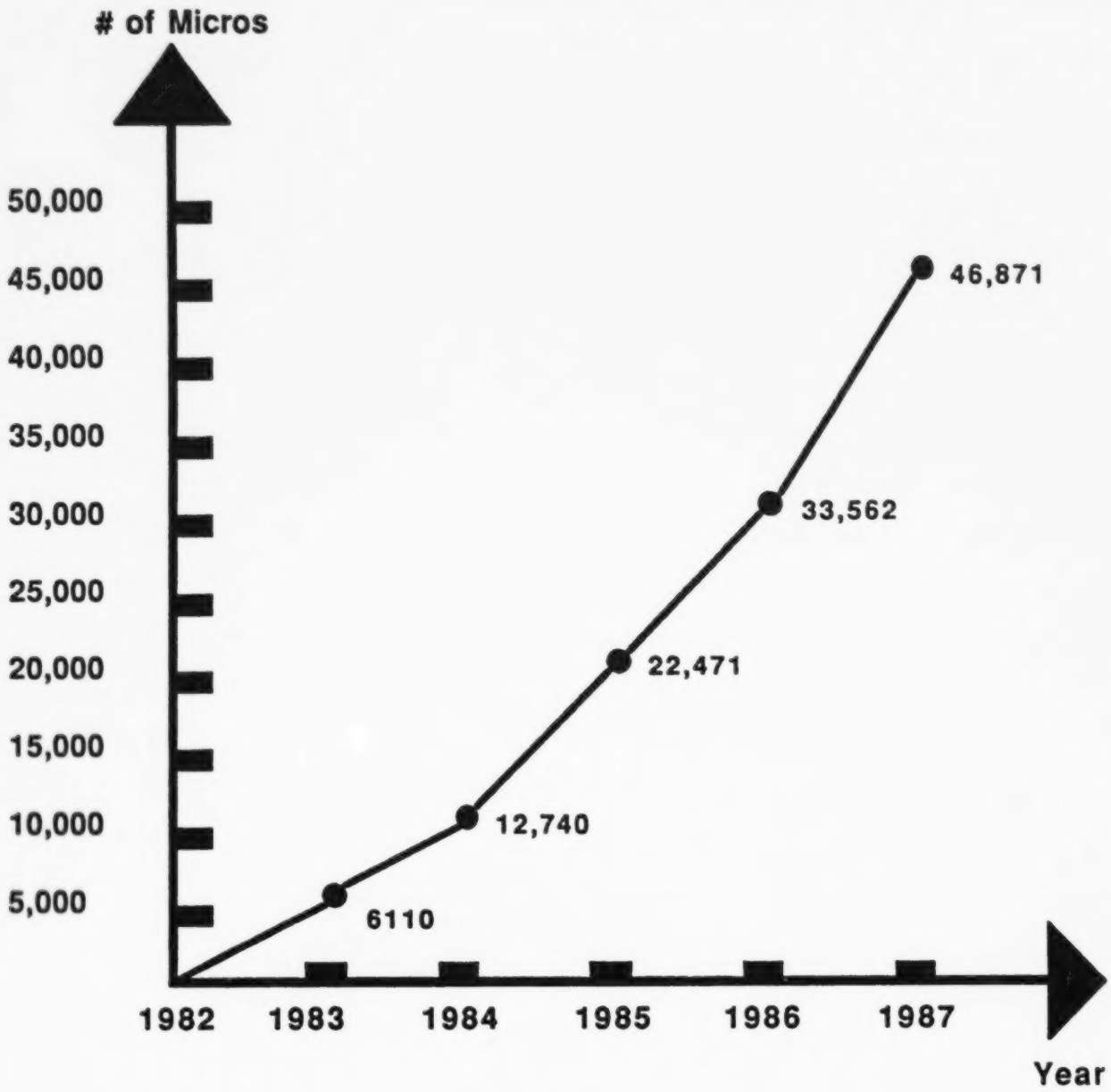




1986-1987
$9.6 million

Figure 2

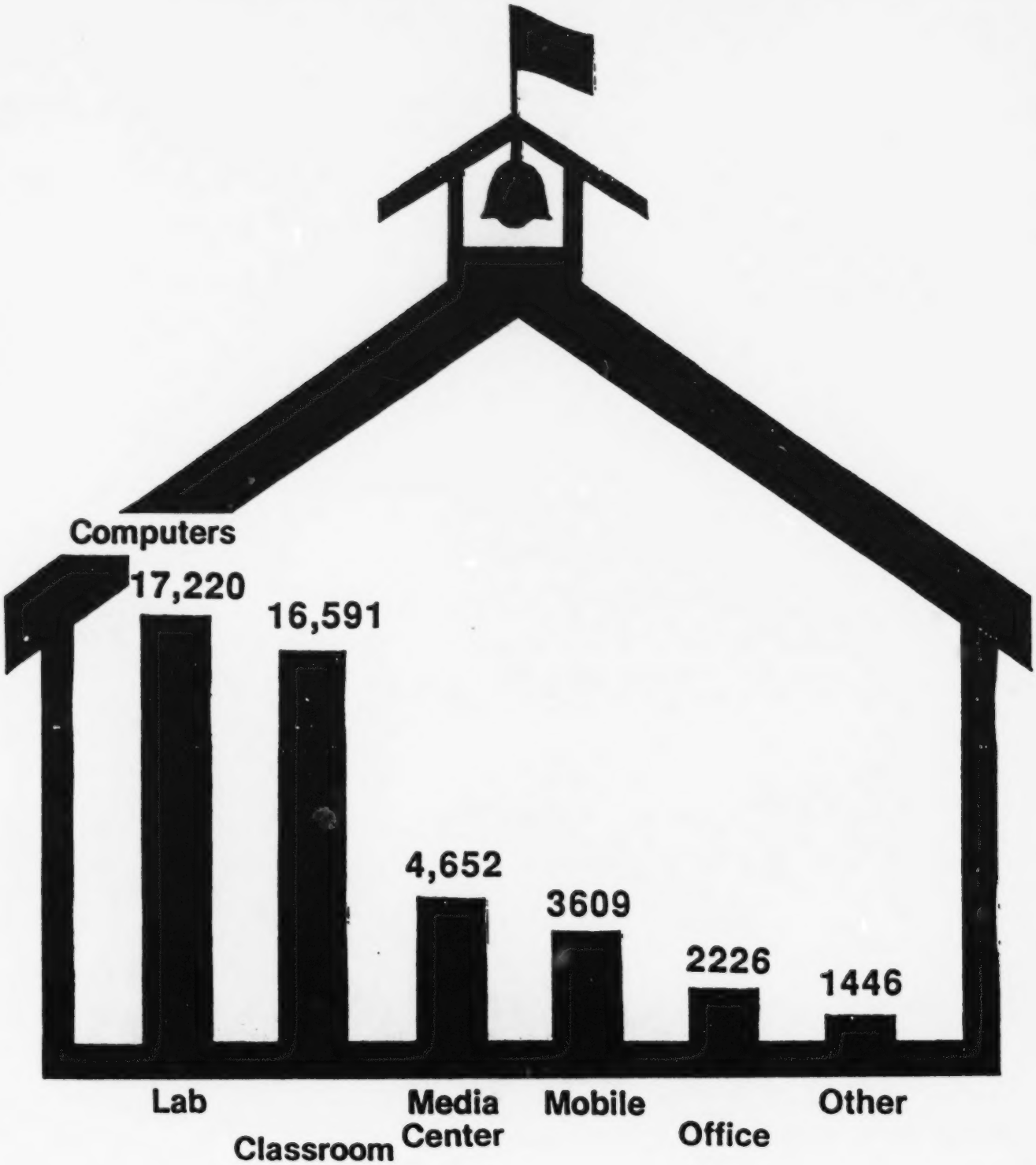
Number of Microcomputers



June, 1987

Figure 3

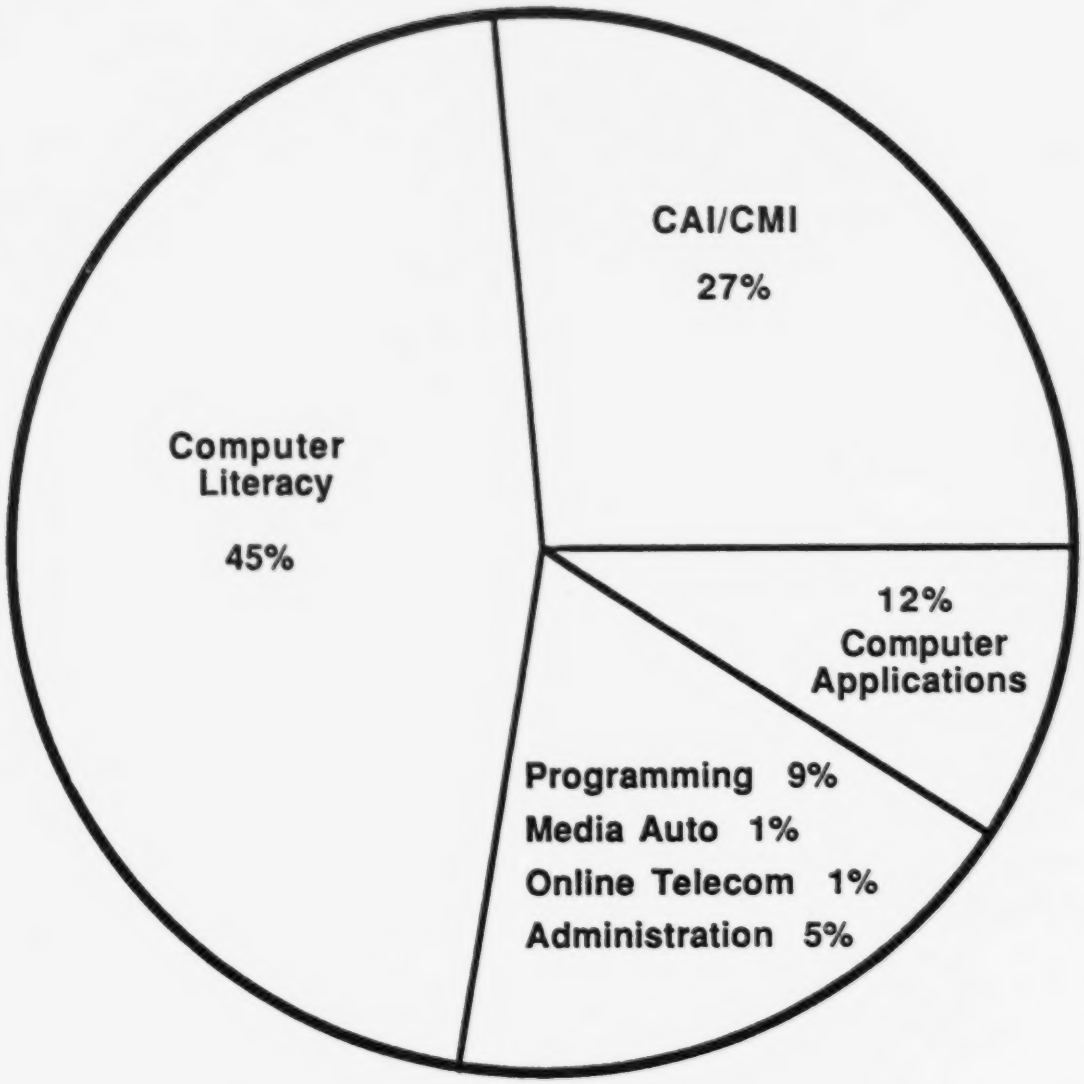
Location of Computers



140 LEAs Reporting

Figure 4

Uses of Microcomputers



June, 1987

Figure 5

1987 and Beyond